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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an elective course in twentieth century lesbian novels, designed for women, that explored the cultural dimensions of lesbianism. It traces the development of the course from the time of its proposal to the departmental curriculum committee to its conclusion at the end of the spring sememster, discusses the publicity and controversy connected with the course, and evaluates its shortcomings and success. The paper also includes copies of the original course proposal, the reading list for the course, a six-page bibliography of lesbian literature and books on related issues, and the evaluation of the course that was submitted to the departmental curriculum committee. (MAI)

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Teaching Lesbian Novels: From Proposal to Reality*

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CS204689

*Paper to be delivered at the convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, Kansas City, November 23-25, 1978.

Something in me would be happier if I could have written a paper about a course in Lesbian literature in which everything went smoothly, a course that met the students' expectations, my expectations, a course that was, by any measure, a stunning success. What I must describe instead was an obstacle course. The difficulties were created, not by overt institutional opposition, but by the more general indifference and hostility toward Lesbian culture in our society. The course itself came to be part of the larger struggle against the invisibility of Lesbians in Western culture, a culture that has not made an effort to preserve artifacts of Lesbian culture, but has, in fact, purposely destroyed Lesbian literature. When some works have been preserved accidentally, they have been altered, and, in most cases, the Lesbian identity of the author has been denied, trivialized, or disguised with "polite" euphemisms, e.g., the poems of Sappho. Teaching is, of course, one of the most effective ways of learning, and I learned a great deal from my experience teaching the Lesbian novels course. In order, then, to share with you what I learned from my experience, I will trace the development of the course from the time that I submitted the course proposal to our departmental curriculum committee to its conclusion at the end of the spring semester, 1978.

A little historical background might be useful here in understanding the relative ease with which the course was accepted by the Department of English. First, Professor Louis Crompton introduced a course in homosexuality in literature, to be cross-listed with the Department of Psychology at the University of Nebraska back in the early '70s. Some of you may recall the political and academic opposition to that course, but I won't dwell here on the details. The debate regarding the "morality" of such a course reached the floor of the legislature in Nebraska, but another political issue crowded it off the front pages and the issue died there. Lou Crompton eventually did offer a similar course, "Sex-Roles in Literature," and that course is still being taught under

that title. Its significance here is that it set a precedent within the university and the department, creating a more accepting intellectual climate. Second, I indicated my desire to teach a course in Lesbian literature to the interviewing committee at MLA, and, after I accepted their offer of a position in the department, it came as no surprise to my colleagues when I submitted a course proposal on "20th-century Lesbian Novelists." (See Appendix A for the text of the original course proposal.)

I had three reasons for limiting the focus of the course to 20th-century Lesbian novelists. The first reason is strictly practical: There is simply too much Lesbian literature in the 20th-century to be covered adequately in one semester. Second, I wanted to leave open the possibility of courses on Lesbian poetry, short stories, and drama. (Or, one might envision a "survey" course.) Third, there isn't much "Lesbian" literature prior to the 20th-century, and what one might include would depend upon a lot of biographical guesswork and reading between the lines, so thoroughly have Lesbian lives been disguised and denied. Finally, we have a course in Continental Women Writers in the department, in which Colette, LeDuc, and Wittig are taught. To avoid overlap, I restricted the course to British and American writers. I omitted Gertrude Stein's work because it's covered in our Survey of Women Writers, although we did discuss her briefly. In short, in structuring the course, I sought to select a reasonable number of works that are largely ignored in Women's Studies and conventional literature discussions.

The course proposal was approved by the departmental curriculum committee without hesitation, although there was some discussion at a later date regarding the title. The considerations on which that discussion focussed deserve some mention here. As you may have noted, Crompton's course does not explicitly mention any of the so-called "flag" words, e.g., Lesbian, Gay, homosexual. My course, in contrast, contained the word Lesbian in its title, and it was

clear that I didn't plan to spend any time discussing male literature of any persuasion. (Although I was open to the charge of "narrow" focus, one might say the same of a course on Chaucer or Joyce, and the issue wasn't raised at that time.) Two potential problems did, however, exist: (1) Public reaction to a course with the word Lesbian in its title; (2) Lack of enrollment because the name of the course would go on student transcripts and grade reports (which go to their parents). Both possibilities represented some danger for all the obvious reasons: Continuing retrenchment in higher education; dwindling enrollments, especially in the non-utilitarian disciplines, such as English; anti-intellectualism as a reality, especially in a state like Nebraska; the then nascent (now rampant) backlash against civil rights movements, but the Lesbian and Gay movements in particular. The department did, however, after considering the variables, go ahead and offer the course as Lesbian literature on the premise that there is a Lesbian subculture with its own values and its own constituency. As a result, the class wound up being offered at the 300-level (third-year undergraduate), rather than as a senior/graduate class at the 400-800 level. We believed that a 300-level number would discourage the merely curious or vicious, indicate that it was being offered as a substantial subject, yet leave it open as an elective for those wimmin who were interested. There was one other request taken into consideration when we settled on a 300 number for the class: The course was also to be cross-listed in Women's Studies, and the majors in the program have to take a certain number of three and four hundred level courses. (The number 310 was chosen because that's our "cover" assignment for courses with a political emphasis. The letter N indicates how far into the alphabet those courses go at the present time.)

The final title of the course was "20th-century Lesbian Novelists," and it was scheduled for the first time in Spring, 1978. During pre-registration, only three students signed up for it, but the department again supported the

class by allowing it to remain on the books for general registration, rather than cancelling it, as is usually done with courses that are under-enrolled at the end of the pre-registration period. In fact, the class justified their optimism and support, and there were 14 undergraduates and two graduate students enrolled. (Graduate students can take a 300-level class under an independent readings number if that particular course isn't offered for graduate credit.)

I should mention here that the class did not escape public attack. During the preceding Fall term, I agreed to an interview with a reporter from the student newspaper, believing (rather naively) that information is always better than silence, especially when it comes to Lesbian issues. I regret granting that interview, and have since refused to discuss any subject with a member of the newspaper's staff. Be that as it may, I was duly interviewed, and stunned to see the printed version a couple of days later. The reporter did accurately publish my statement that I was "discouraging" male students from enrolling for the class, because I didn't (and don't) believe that they have anything of value to contribute to a class in which the focus is wimmin's experience (of <u>any</u> kind). As you can imagine, this alerted the public to the existence of the course, and brought down a torrent of letters and editorials in local newspapers. (The story was picked up by newspapers as far away as Sioux City, Iowa.) I was called for further interviews by other reporters, but was, by then, once burned and shy. I had "no comment." I thanked the goddess that I had used the verb "discourage" and not "bar." Thereby hung the legal status of the course. The department stood behind me in my right to determine who I wanted in the class, as long as no one was refused the right to enroll, and the class was not legally challenged. Interestingly enough, my statement that I would discourage male students from enrolling seemed to shift the focus of the attacks in the local media. Instead of concentrating on the fact that it was a class on Lesbian literature, the newspaper reporters attacked it on two grounds:

(1) That the subject matter was "too narrow" (we had foreseen this); (2) that university courses should be open to "everyone," and all students "had a right" to the information offered in the class. In effect, by saying that I didn't want males in the class, the focus of the attack was shifted to who could take the course rather than what the course was about. I did receive obscene phone calls, I did have male students coming to talk to me about why I didn't want them in the class, but the course itself was not directly threatened. The last time that the class received public notice (that I am aware of) was in February of this year, when a retired postman attended the legislative session where the University's budget was being discussed. He contended that courses in Lesbianism shouldn't be offered to Nebraska "children" (sic!), and that the University shouldn't get any money if it was going to teach their children "immorality." One or two legislators agreed with him, but as far as I know that was the end of it.

The first class meeting was extremely tense for me and for the students. Because I was unsure of their politics, and their reasons for taking the course, I wavered between a lecture format and an open discussion approach on that day. They wouldn't talk, so I settled into a discussion of the structure of the course, the novels we would be reading, and the resources available in the library. As it turned out, it was just as well that I lectured. About 20 minutes into the class, one male student appeared with a course card, and all the wimmin in the room tensed. (Some later told me they had come to class prepared for battle the first day.) I ignored him (as best I could) and went on with the introductory lecture, which lasted for about another 20 minutes. That was the first, and the only time we saw him. He dropped the course the next day, never having uttered a word. We had one other male problem early in the class. A gay activist, who had agreed to take the course as an independent readings course with me, decided that he would "benefit" from listening to the

wimmin discuss the novels. Although I tried to explain to him that his presence would either alter or stifle discussion altogether, he was insistent, so I brought the matter to the class for discussion and resolution. Because I felt strongly that this novels course was for the wimmin enrolled in it, I believed that it was up to them to decide whose presence they could/would tolerate during their discussions. We wound up devoting one of our hours to that issue, which angered some of the wimmin, but the class finally decided that they didn't want any males in the class, gay or otherwise.[1] That was the last male disruption for the remainder of the semester.

When I proposed the course, and during the preceding semester, while I was structuring it and choosing the novels, I had certain expectations regarding the political and intellectual awareness of the wimmin who would enroll. I assumed for example, that the class would be composed primarily of Lesbians, particularly Lesbians with a relatively high degree of political awareness. I was right, and I was wrong. Because the course had the word Lesbian in its title, I assumed that students willing to have it listed on their transcripts (and sent home to their parents) would already be "out front" as Lesbian activists on campus. I also assumed that those hetero wimmin who took the class would come from the politically active segment of the feminist population. Here, I was clearly in error. There were only a few feminists in the class, and those wimmin were extremely moderate in their feminist politics. Of the Lesbians, virtually all of them referred to themselves as gay, rather than Lesbian, and, although they didn't want males in the class, only one called herself a separatist.[2] Consequently, I discovered that, where I had expected some familiarity with feminist and Lesbian media, publishers, and ideology, the class members hadn't read any of the journals, books, novels, or newspapers that constitute the contemporary Lesbian/Feminist media, nor were they aware that such materials existed. On that first day, I realized that we were going

to have to begin from "scratch" and that I couldn't assume any previous knowledge of Lesbian culture on the part of the students. They were, surprisingly, in the class to learn what they didn't know, to discover facets of their own lives that were unavailable to them through the larger culture.

I rushed home that afternoon and began pulling books and journals off my shelves, sat down at the typewriter, and made up a haphazard bibliography that I could present to them the next day. I say "haphazard" because the bibliography was based only on the books and journals I happened to have on my shelves at the time, or those whose titles I remembered vaguely. I also went through the lists of recent library acquisitions sent out by the departmental curriculum committee and typed out those Lesbian/Feminist books and journals, with their call numbers, that had been added to the library shelves. (I should say here that both the departmental committee and the librarians were very helpful, where they could be, in increasing the library's holdings in Lesbian literature in the interests of the course I was teaching. For example, we now have the complete microfilm edition of The Ladder, with its index, available for research use.) Constructing that bibliography, as incomplete and inaccurate as it was, was a lesson for me. (See Appendix B for the Bibliography.) Previously, I had taken all of that material "for granted" in some ways. I knew that it was valuable to me, personally, but the ignorance of my students increased its value for me ten-fold. Here was something I could give them; I could give them their culture; I could give them what they had never had before. It was, therefore, with a great deal of excitement that I appeared in class on the second day, with piles of dittoed materials and stacks of journals, including original issues of The Ladder. I passed the journals around as I discussed the bibliography, trying desperately to give them in one 50-minute session what they had never had in their lives. I suspect now that I was guilty of "overload," but at the time I wanted most of all for them to see and touch the artifacts of Lesbian culture, the records of our present struggle.

I also gave them, on the second day, copies of several articles that would be used to provide a structure for our class discussions for the rest of the semester, including: Toni McNaron's "Finding and Studying Lesbian Culture," my own "Uninhabited Angels: Metaphors for Love," Karen Vierneisel's "An Annotated Checklist of Lesbian Feminist Resources," Bertha Harris' "What We Mean to Say: Notes Toward Defining the Nature of Lesbian Literature," and two articles that dealt specifically with the first novel we would be reading, Faderman and Williams' "Radclyffe Hall and the Lesbian Image" and Sybil Korff Vincent's unpublished manuscript, "Nothing Fails Like Success: Radclyffe Hall's 'The Well of Loneliness.' Karen Vierneisel's annotated checklist was given to them as part of the more general effort to connect them with available Lesbian/Feminist resources, including the New Alexandria Library in Chicago and the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York City. Toni McNaron's article on finding Lesbian culture was intended to provide a general cultural context for our discussions. The articles on Lesbian literature by myself and Bertha Harris were provided as representative of two views of the definition of Lesbian literature and its role in Lesbian culture, while those on The Well of Loneliness offered opposing perspectives on the place of that novel in Lesbian literature. (See Appendix C for the bibliographic citations of these articles.) The articles, then, were chosen in an effort to build a cultural context where there had been none before, and to start with the very general political and experiential problems of defining Lesbian culture and move gradually to the ways in which those problems determine our view of specific novels such as The Well of Loneliness (TWOL).

It was just as well that I had to resort to spending several days on the handouts and articles, because TWOL never arrived at the bookstore; it had gone out of print once again! Consequently, the students and I had to borrow copies from friends and faculty members who were willing to lend them out to us, so it

was two weeks before we were able to begin class discussions on the novel. When I'd made up the reading list, I'd planned to average one week on each novel, less time on some of the earlier, shorter novels, e.g., We Too Are Drifting and Olivia, more time on the longer and more complicated novels such as The Cook and the Carpenter, Lover, and Flying. Because we started late with TWOL, we ran behind the original schedule, but yet another text problem freed an extra week for us. In an effort to cover the several kinds of oppression that Lesbians experience, I'd included Loving Her (which has the only Black Lesbian protagonist in a Lesbian novel), Sister Gin (whose characters include older Lesbians and Lesbians going through menopause), and Yesterday's Lessons (which documents the life of a working-class Lesbian). Unfortunately, Yesterday's Lessons, originally published by the Women's Press Collective in California, was never shipped to us by Diana Press. Now, there's a very good reason why Diana Press didn't process the order: On October 26, 1977, Diana Press was broken into and manuscripts, paste-ups, plates, and books ready to be shipped out were destroyed. In addition, the presses were almost, but not quite, rendered inoperable. (Some have been salvaged by insurance.) No one knows who was responsible for such destruction; no one has been charged with the crime. But there were consequences for something as small and far away as my Lesbian novels class in Nebraska. Consider: Diana Press is wiped out; their Fall line of books is destroyed; books ready to be shipped out to bookstores and libraries are destroyed; the books never appear on shelves in stores or libraries; the books become "unavailable" to students, researchers, even casual readers; Diana Press cannot meet sales agreements and cannot make money thereby; Diana Press folds. Now, Diana Press hasn't yet folded, and they've been trying to get back to their publishing schedule, but haven't yet. Nevertheless, there are books we can't order for the library because the plates were destroyed. The students

in my Lesbian novels class haven't read the story of a working-class Lesbian. We all lost a great deal, and the events of October 26, 1977, have affected the course of Lesbian culture.

Sabotage. The Lesbian novels course became yet another part of the on-going struggle to defeat patriarchal efforts to destroy Lesbian culture, to perpetrate the invisibility of Lesbians and Lesbian writers. Item: The Well of Loneliness goes out of print. Item: Yesterday's Lessons is never shipped. Item: We couldn't read Catching Saradove or The Confessions of Cherubino by Bertha Harris because Harcourt Brace Jovanovich let them go out of print. (The Confessions of Cherubino has just been reprinted by Daughters, Inc.). Item: I had to use Against the Season by Jane Rule, instead of her This Is Not For You because the latter is out of print. Item: Only a few of the older Lesbian novels could be ordered for the course because they are only available through the Arno Press Reprint Series on Homosexuality (sic!), and each of those slim volumes costs $9.00! (Alternatively, one can order copies through Elysian Fields, and pay upwards of $5 and $6 for the original paperback editions, which cost around 25¢ and 35¢ when they first appeared.) Item: We cannot even depend upon the Feminist publishers to respond to library orders! We finally had to cancel library orders to Out and Out Books because the librarians couldn't find them by phone! The results: Huge portions of Lesbian heritage and culture are lost daily through carelessness and indifference. More has been lost in the past centuries and right now through overt acts of violence. Thus, what might appear to be a rather mundane, low-key course in Lesbian novels became a struggle to survive for all of us.

The final disaster, in my own eyes, was my own illness at the end of the spring semester, which caused me to miss the last three weeks of the course, those valuable, important weeks when I had planned to tie the many threads

we had spun together into a single, coherent picture. That never happened, and, as a result, my own expectations were never satisfied. I had hoped to manage discussions of larger issues at the end of the class: The nature and definition of "Lesbian literature" (Is The Well of Loneliness a Lesbian novel?); What is the relationship between Lesbian literature and Lesbian culture?; What is (or should be) the relationship between a Feminist and a Lesbian perspective?; Does being a self-identified Lesbian qualify a writer as a "Lesbian writer?;" Is there a definable Lesbian aesthetics? By ending the term with writers like Bertha Harris and Kate Millett, I had hoped to bring our discussions full circle and back to issues raised in the articles I'd given out at the beginning of the class. My absence created a vacuum that the students could not fill, although a few of them did meet regularly and talk among themselves about the novels and articles. Those few have later told me that for them the Lesbian novels course never ended, so it's probably just as well that I did get sick. What I'm saying here is that there was no "neat" or "tidy" resolution. The issues remain alive and crucial to them, and I also know that other students are still completing the reading list on their own.

There was a single question final: "Using Toni McNaron's definition of Lesbian culture, discuss the novels we've read this semester and whether or not each of them can be called a (Lesbian) novel." There was also a term paper, but the results were largely disappointing. There was simply no way that those students, many of whom were not English majors, could undertake a major term project on the literature of their culture when the necessary research resources were so few and so scarce.

I don't want to end this paper in a manner that would suggest that the course on 20th-century Lesbian novelists was a failure. I believe that the class was a major, if qualified, success. (See Appendix C for the evaluation of the course I prepared for our departmental curriculum committee.) The

students arrived on the first day knowing nothing, not even what they could expect from a course on Lesbian novels. No disaster, engineered or otherwise, could alter the fact that they would leave the course with more information than they had when they entered it. In one sense, therefore, there was no way that I could fail as a teacher. But the quality of the course was a result of the wimmin themselves. They worked, they argued (in and out of class), and they brought the best (and the worst) of their own lives to bear on the study of Lesbian literature. Regardless of the obstacles in the way of the course, I would teach it again, and probably will. The struggles in which we engaged, the real-world obstacles to our purpose, became a part of the educational experience for me and the students, and the effects of such hindrances communicated the realities of Lesbian politics more surely than any quantity of abstract rhetoric could have. For those of us who participated in the course, it hasn't ended; it's still beginning.

Endnotes

[1] After the class had voted not to admit him to our discussions, the gay male decided to drop the independent readings course, which indicated to me that he (a) wasn't really interested in the substance of the course, the novels themselves, and/or (b) at some level, he believed that the wimmin would let him into the class if he was persistent.

[2] Just as many wimmin avoid the label <u>feminist</u> because of its political force, so, it seems to me, many Lesbians avoid the label <u>separatist</u>, even though they consistently exclude males from their lives. I suspect that both labels signify an explicit political position, and, because it isn't currently fashionable to <u>have</u> well-defined political beliefs in America, many wimmin avoid labeling their beliefs, however they structure their lives. There is also the ideological conflict with humanism, implicit in the term separatist, and few wimmin are presently willing to enter into that particular debate.

Appendix A

Original Course Proposal

Department of English
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

Submitted by: Julia P. Stanley Date: 9/22/76

Proposed catalog title: Lesbian Novelists of the Twentieth Century

Recommended teacher(s): Stanley

Course level:
_____ 100 (for freshmen; meets Arts & Science composition requirement)
_____ 200 (primarily for sophomores but open to juniors and seniors; non-major enrollment expected)
_____ 300 (primarily for juniors and seniors; limited non-major enrollment expected)
XX 400/800 (primarily for senior majors and graduate students)

Method of instruction: Mostly discussion, some lectures at the beginning

On separate typed sheets, please provide the information requested below. Since this proposal, upon approval, becomes the department's official record of the proposed course, the Curriculum Committee would appreciate carefully thought out and reasonably detailed responses.

1. NEED & AUDIENCE: What do you feel is the need and audience for the proposed course? Please distinguish this course from those already approved with which it might be confused.

2. GOALS: What are the goals of the course as you conceive it? (Keep in mind the level you have indicated above.)

3. READING LIST: Please include a list of the works from which your reading assignments will be chosen. The list need not be exhaustive, but it should suggest to the Committee the number and range of works to be considered. The list should be in harmony with the level suggested for the course.

4. OUTLINE: Please give an outline of the course (not necessarily a weekly assignment schedule), indicating the topics you plan to deal with and the methodology and approach you plan to use. The outline should be in harmony with your stated goals and with your reading list. Please state the written or other requirements of the course aside from the list of readings.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY: Please provide a list of representative titles which might be useful to teachers preparing the proposed course; that is, a list of secondary works which deal with the topics to be covered and the approach to be used.

RETURN PROPOSAL TO VICE CHAIRMAN OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, 203B ANDREWS

1. The need for a course on Lesbian novelists is, I think, fairly obvious: Novels written by Lesbians are rarely taught in literature courses because so few of them have been accepted into the category of "worthwhile" literature, that is, literature that "ought" to be taught. Those authors whose works have been taught are rarely discussed from a point of view that considers the effects of their Lesbianism on their novels, or the consequences of social ostracism for their portrayal of Lesbian characters. For example, although Djuna Barnes and Gertrude Stein are sometimes taught in courses on twentieth century literature, they are usually discussed as "figures" who happened to write in the early part of this century. A course such as the one I am proposing would examine the ways in which cultural definitions have affected the Lesbian writer's subject matter and portrayal of characters, and the ways in which the Lesbian has viewed herself and her culture. The course would probably appeal to undergraduate and graduate English majors, especially those interested in the twentieth century, to students majoring in women's studies, and to Lesbians and gay males whether or not they are English majors.

2. GOALS: The unique perspective of the Lesbian writer is rarely encountered in the classroom, even in those instances when a novel authored by a Lesbian is discussed. Starting with Radclyffe Hall's Well of Loneliness and readin Lesbian novels written during the twentieth century, up to 1976, the course will trace the development of a Lesbian consciousness, from the self-mutilating sacrifice of Hall to the laughter of Brown, the irony of Nachman, and the lyricism of Harris. The course will give students the opportunity to read a body of literature of which many of them are unaware, and allow them to explore the development and growth of an outcast perspective.

3. READING LIST:

Required novels:

Hall, Radclyffe. The Well of Loneliness. London: Corgi, 1972
Barnes, Djuna. Nightwood. New York: New Directions, 1961.
Wilhelm, Gale. We Too Are Drifting. (1935)
Olivia, (pseud.). Olivia. (1949)
Morgan, Claire. The Price of Salt. (1952)
Bannon, Ann. Journey to a Woman. (1960)
Rule, Jane. This Is Not for You.
Harris, Bertha. Confessions of Cherubino. New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1972.
Brown, Rita Mae. Rubyfruit Jungle. Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1973.
Nachman, Elana. Riverfinger Women. Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1974.
The Carpenter. The Cook and the Carpenter. Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1973.
Isabell, Sharon. Yesterday's Lessons. Oakland, Calif.: The Women's Press Collective, 1974.
Arnold, June. Sister Gin. Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1975.
Brown, Rita Mae. In Her Day. Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1976.
Harris, Bertha. Lover. Plainfield, Vt.: Daughters, Inc., 1976.

Reserve List:

Abbott, Sidney, and Barbara Love. Sappho was a Right-on Woman. New York: Stein & Day, 1972.
Klaich, Dolores. Woman Plus Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.
Martin, Del, and Phyllis Lyon. Lesbian/Woman. New York: Bantam, 1972.
Wysor, Bettie. The Lesbian Myth: Insights and Conversations. New York: Random House, 1974.
Rule, Jane. Lesbian Images. New York: Doubleday, 1975.
Foster, Jeannette. Sex-Variant Women in Literature. Baltimore: Diana Press, 1975.

4. OUTLINE:

I. Introduction to the course

A. The invisibility of Lesbians in our culture

B. The outcast perspective

C. A brief survey of the development of the Lesbian perspective as it is manifested in twentieth century novels

II. The breakthrough novel: The Well of Loneliness

III. Nightwood: What Does It Mean?

IV. The so-called "trash" novels: We Too Are Drifting, Olivia, The Price of Salt, Journey to a Woman

V. The end of apology: This Is Not for You, Catching Saradove, Confessions of Cherubino, Patience and Sarah

VI. Breaking new ground: Rubyfruit Jungle, The Cook and the Carpenter, Riverfinger Women, Yesterday's Lessons, Loving Her, Lover, In Her Day

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

The only representative titles I could recommend beyond those already suggested in my reserve reading list would be those found in the Arno Reprint Series on Homosexuality. Other secondary sources are listed in my reserve list as background reading at the beginning of the course.

Supplement to cover sheet, New Course Proposal Form

1. Please indicate whether you have planned this course primarily for offering:

_____ during a regular semester

_____ during one of the five-week summer sessions

__XX__ during the summer pre-session

_____ during an interim or winterim

_____ as a workshop _____ how many days or weeks?

_____ as an extension division course

2. For how many credit hours should the course be offered? 3

3. Has the course already been scheduled? If so, when? No.

4. If the course has not been scheduled, please indicate when you expect or would like to give it for the first time.
Summer pre-session, 1977

5. Please indicate your current preparation with regard to the proposed course:

__XX__ I am prepared to teach the course at any time.

_____ I am working on the course, and will be prepared by the time indicated in #4 above.

_____ The course is in the planning stage. I would work it up if the Committee approves it and sees a need for it.

_____ I am interested in working up the course, but I will need time off (leave or course reduction) in order to prepare it adequately.

Appendix B

ENG 310N
Twentieth-century Lesbian Novelists

Bibliography of Lesbian Literature BIBLIOGRAPHY*

What follows is haphazard, based primarily on my own collection, and therefore selective. Nevertheless, I hope that it'll give you some idea of the literature currently available (or, as the case may be, OUT OF PRINT). One note: I'm not sure about whether all of the authors are Lesbians; the ones I'm unsure of are marked with a question mark (?). (!) - non-wimmin or non-Lesbians.

NOVELS (and such)

Aldridge, Sarah. 1976. Cytherea's Breath. Reno, Nevada: Naiad Press.

_____. 1975. The Latecomer. Reno, Nevada: Naiad Press.

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1. Also: Special issue, LESBIAN ART AND ARTISTS, Heresies, Fall 1977, #3. Available from Heresies, POB 766, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013.

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PUBLISHERS

Daughters, Inc.
54 Seventh Ave. So.
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Diana Press
4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608

(The Women's Press Collective has merged with Diana, so orders for their books should go to Diana Press.)

Effie's Press
1420 45th St., Studio 45
Emeryville, CA 94608

Naiad Press
POB 5025
Reno, Nevada

Womanpress
Box 59330
Chicago, IL 60645

Appendix C

Course Evaluation

(includes lists of novels read
and articles distributed to the class)

Department of English
University of Nebraska-Lincoln *

NEW COURSE EVALUATION

Submitted by: JULIA P. STANLEY Date: SEPT. 8, 1978

Catalog title and No.: 310N: 20TH-CENTURY LESBIAN NOVELISTS

Course offered first time in the SPRING semester of 1978. Credit Hours 3

Teacher: JULIA P. STANLEY

On separate typed sheets, please provide the information requested below. Since this evaluation becomes the department's official record of this course, the Curriculum Committee would appreciate carefully thought out and reasonably detailed responses.

1. In your judgement, was this an appropriate level for the course?

2. Was need for the course justified by enrollment? Describe briefly the student audience. Were need and audience consistent with your original expectations? Would you recommend continuance of the course? How often should it be offered?

3. Were the goals of the course fulfilled? Did your approach to the course change?

4. Please append the syllabus used in the course. How successful were the course plan, the methodology and approach, and the assignments? Did they vary from your original proposal?

5. The Curriculum Committee thinks this evaluation might in many cases be helpful to other teachers wishing to offer this course. May we have your permission to attach a copy of the evaluation to the official description of the course (kept in the Vice-Chairman's permanent file)?

✓ yes _____ no

Julia P. Stanley
signature

*The departmental curriculum committee asks for evaluation of all new courses by the instructor(s) after they are offered for the first time.

(1) I think the 300-level is ideal for this type of literature course, because it makes it possible to assume a specific level of literary and intellectual sophistication on the part of the students enrolled, and some commitment on their part to performing at a higher level than they might expect to in, say, a 200-level course. On the other hand, keeping the course at the 300-level does not discourage non-majors from signing up for it, whereas a 400-level number would probably not attract students who aren't majoring in English or Women's Studies.

(2) There were 14 undergraduates enrolled in the course, and 2 graduate students enrolled in 800-level independent readings courses. I would say that 16 is a respectable enrollment for a politically controversial course that was being offered for the first time. The students who enrolled were all women, which I expected and hoped for, but their needs were considerably different from what I had projected. (See #3 below.) Yes, I think the course should be continued, perhaps every two years. I have had some requests to offer it at night, when non-academic women could take it, and I've given this possibility some thought since the Women's Studies Area Committee was approached by the Continuing Ed. Division about offering Women's Studies courses at night.

(3) My approach to the course changed considerably after I had met with the class for the first time. I had assumed, erroneously, that the students who enrolled would be much more in touch with Lesbian culture and media than they were. When I realized that they were absolutely ignorant about journals available, significant Lesbian writers, and the Lesbian community in general, I went home and compiled a rough chronological bibliography for them and brought in copies of the best Lesbian and Lesbian/Feminist periodicals being published. I also made up dittos of recent library acquisitions, with their call numbers, so that they would become familiar with the library holdings. My more modest goal for the course, introducing students to a literature and a culture that is largely ignored, was fulfilled beyond my expectations. The students keep coming back to me to talk about ideas and theories of Lesbian literature that were introduced in class, and tell me that they keep coming back to those questions, seeking answers of their own. I also know that many of them have continued reading beyond the course for their own enjoyment and information. (Surely that is one of the most important contributions of literature courses to any student's life.) I, of course, had more high-flown goals for myself, such as seeking clarification of definitions of Lesbian literature, the Lesbian novel, and the role of literature in constructing a nascent culture. Those goals fell by the wayside, as they should have, in order to satisfy the needs of the students.

(4) The course plan, my methodology (discussion), and the reading assignments were successful, insofar as that was possible. Unfortunately, I was sick the last three weeks of the course and so was unable to carry through with the course as I had planned it. To the students' credit, they continued to meet in my absence, which is perhaps some evidence that the course plan was successful, since its completion was not dependent on my presence.

310N: Twentieth-century Lesbian Novelists

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